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REVIEWS.

The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare. Ashley H. Thorndike, Ph. D., Associate Professor of English, Western Reserve University. Worcester, Mass. Press of Oliver B. Wood. 1901.

Shakespeare's indebtedness to his contemporaries is a subject that especially needs careful research: of guess-work, more or less frankly avowed as such, we have already had a riotous abundance. Prof. Thorndike's monograph is a scholarly piece of original investigation, whose conclusions must be accorded serious consideration. The author's task is to show that Shakespeare, towards the end of his career, was definitely influenced by the two younger playwrights. Stated more specifically, Dr. Thorndike's thesis is that *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest* follow, in part at least, a successful fashion set by a group of Beaumont-Fletcher plays, of which *Philaster* may serve as representative. To establish this proposition, or even to show an antecedent probability in its favor, requires, to begin with, no little clearing of the ground.

It is obvious enough that in the first decade of the seventeenth century Beaumont and Fletcher (not to raise the question of the respective shares they had in the plays that pass under their joined names) produced several plays of a practically new type, that was neither comedy nor tragedy, but a fluent mixture of the two, deserving because of the general tone and the happy endings, the name (for lack of a better) of heroic romance. Whether the species originated with Beaumont and Fletcher, and if so, whether it had an appreciable influence on Shakespeare, is a question involving a minute consideration of the chronology of all the plays concerned, and a careful comparison of their essential qualities. Dr. Thorndike has mapped out his work in a thoroughly logical way, and does himself scant justice by speaking of the "somewhat arbitrary order" in which his investigation is presented. There is, to be sure, a very full discussion of certain minor points (minor, so far as this thesis is concerned), such as Shakespeare's

probable share in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and Fletcher's hand in *Henry VIII*; but these things have a bearing upon any question of relationship between Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare, and if they are worth speaking of at all, they are worth speaking of at length. And likewise, before discussing the chronology of the plays of the three dramatists, it is necessary not merely to touch upon, but to explain fully, certain facts and hypotheses in the general stage history of the time, that have much to do with determining the precise date of any play within the period. And in any event, the orderly division of the treatise into chapters prevents confusion. The method is exhaustive, but not cumbersome.

The scheme of the first part of the work, then, involves a preliminary discussion of Beaumont and Fletcher's relation to the theatrical companies, and of such points in stage history as have to do with the plays of the two collaborators; the chronology of Shakespeare's three plays, above mentioned; dates and authorship of *Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*; and the chronology of the Beaumont-Fletcher plays,—especially, of course, of those before 1612. So much may be termed the negative part of the investigation. It may be said immediately that the reasoning is careful, and that so far as the very difficult data permit, the author has succeeded in making very plausible the first part of his case, namely: the chronological possibility of such an influence as he urges.

Regarding Beaumont and Fletcher's connection with theatrical companies, Dr. Thorndike rejects Mr. Fleay's arrangement of the plays into groups dependent upon the companies for which they were written, and assumes, rightly enough, that "before 1616 there is no evidence connecting either Beaumont or Fletcher for fixed periods with any company." Mr. Fleay's contention that the theatres were closed for sixteen months in 1608-9 on account of the plague, is set aside as conflicting with such facts as (*e. g.*) the production of *Epicoene* in 1609. The occupancy of Blackfriars by the King's men in 1608, and Beaumont and Fletcher's writing for the King's men before Shakespeare stopped writing for them, are also insisted upon, in opposition to Mr. Fleay, as facts bearing upon the question in hand. The possibility of settling dates indirectly, through determining authorship, is also discussed: Dr. Thorndike notes, of course, that but little that is

authoritative on the question of authorship may be gained from the evidence of the early quartos and folios, although the 1679 folio's list of actors is obviously an important aid. And as a further step in the matter of authorship leading to an establishment of dates (in general, the author does not go into authorship questions except where a date is concerned), Dr. Thorndike proposes a new and simple verse-test: the use of 'them' and 'em' in such expressions, for example, as 'let them' and 'let em'. A counting of such usage shows in some unquestioned plays of Fletcher the immense preponderance of 'em'; in Beaumont, an indiscriminate use of both forms; in *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest*, five them's to one em. This test is suggested only as a supplementary one; and rightly so, for no verse-test can be regarded as absolutely satisfying, unless the mannerism it exhibits be unique.¹ As a final point in this part of the treatise, the influence of the court mask upon public drama is touched upon: specifically in the use, after 1608, of professional actors in the anti-masks, a custom which undoubtedly led to the introduction of anti-mask elements into plays (*e. g.* in *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Winter's Tale*). With these several considerations fairly set forth, Dr. Thorndike proceeds to the dating of the plays involved in his investigation.

Here the important thing is to show that the Beaumont-Fletcher antedates the Shakespeare series. Owing to a lack of certainty regarding many of the dates, it is not possible to do more than to indicate a strong probability. For instance, in the case of the most significant dates, those of *Cymbeline* and *Philaster*, it is not possible to demonstrate which play preceded the other, although it seems rather more likely that *Philaster* antedates *Cymbeline* than that *Cymbeline* antedates *Philaster*; for *Philaster* is probably the earliest of a group which by 1611 was well established and it is hardly within the range of probability that all of the plays of the group could have been produced in less than two or three years. In any event, the chronological question

1. As a general remark, not bearing on Dr. Thorndike's work, I should like to add that in dealing with cases of collaboration, altogether too much importance is attached by literary students to the evidence of style. It is rarely likely that respective shares in a play can be determined by finding out what the men wrote. Collaboration implies planning as well as writing, and a play might be half Beaumont's, although Beaumont might not have written a single word of it. This is a point too often neglected in dramatic criticism.

reduces itself to this: by 1611 Beaumont and Fletcher had written six "romances" and Shakespeare three; the type of these nine being an innovation in dramatic formula, one group must have pretty directly influenced the other; and while the chances are that Beaumont and Fletcher set the fashion, it is not certain that they did. Dr. Thorndike having thus, in point of chronology, shown only a probability that Shakespeare was the imitator, not the originator, goes on to examine the plays themselves. The strength of the position thus far, although the point is not greatly emphasized by the author, is that an influence seems certain, and the alternative thesis,—that the fashion was set by Shakespeare,—would be much harder to defend.

The second, or positive, part of the thesis is the examination of the plays, with the purpose of showing their relationship. This examination involves first a sketch of the drama of the first ten years of the seventeenth century, and seeks to show from internal evidence, that the "romance" is really an innovation and must be credited either to Beaumont and Fletcher or to Shakespeare. Brief as the sketch is, it takes into consideration all the extant plays, with two exceptions, that were produced between 1601 and 1611, and may be regarded as making almost certain the point it seeks to establish. A general discussion of the qualities or elements of the "romance" as found in Beaumont-Fletcher now follows. Dr. Thorndike's analysis is thorough and embraces the essential things,—the plot of sentimental love and devotion contrasted with sensuality and intrigue, the variety of interest, the rapidity of movement, the theatricality (if one may so call it) of situation and of character, the happy endings, the spectacular opportunities, the lack of genuinely psychological character-drawing, the more or less conventionalized types of maiden, hero, coward, and shameless woman,—and yet nowhere are the qualities of the romance effectively summarized, nor are entirely cogent reasons offered for rejecting this or that play from the ranks of the romance,—a term which the reader must feel to be used without a satisfactory and serviceable definition.

This is a point that becomes the more apparent when one is called upon to consider the general characteristics of the Shakespearean romance. No one can cavil at grouping under one head, with or without definition, *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*,

A King and No King, *Cupid's Revenge*, and *Thierry and Theodoret*, but one demands an exhaustive, or at least a clear, definition, if *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest* are to be grouped together as resembling one another in general form of plot and of characterization. That they have some general points of resemblance is plain enough, but not many students, one fancies, will be willing to proceed with full approval to the next step, the examination, namely, of the resemblances between the Beaumont-Fletcher romances and the Shakespearean romances, as exemplified in "typical representatives of either class—*Cymbeline* and *Philaster*." (p. 151).

Here, indeed, lies the weakness of Dr. Thorndike's case—so far as it is weak. *Philaster* is a typical Beaumont-Fletcher romance; *Cymbeline* is not in anything like the same sense typical of the Shakespearean romance (to use the term without further question). This objection, to be sure, does not affect the striking resemblance, and probable indebtedness, of *Cymbeline* to *Philaster*, but it does help to invalidate the claim of a similar Beaumont-Fletcher influence continuing through *Tempest* and *Winter's Tale*. The objection, too, is the more marked because Dr. Thorndike in stating the characteristics of the Shakespearean romance, draws them mainly from *Cymbeline* and then says later that "all that has been said of the romances of Shakespeare applies with especial force to *Cymbeline*." (p. 152). This seems perilously near to begging the question. In accounting for the difference, which the writer recognizes, between *Tempest* and *Winter's Tale* and the Beaumont-Fletcher romances, Dr. Thorndike ascribes it to Shakespeare's own developing of the adopted type. This is reasonable, but in pointing out the resemblances, Dr. Thorndike is not quite as fair. In speaking of *Tempest* he says (p. 164), "For the plot there is, as usual, a story of sentimental love, and a correlated plot of intrigue and murder." So there is, but is not this a resemblance to the Beaumont-Fletcher romance in story and not in plot? In dramatic study the distinction is crucial.

But if the author has not succeeded in establishing beyond question the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare, he has, as I have already suggested, made it extremely hard for any one to argue that in the romantic innovation Shakespeare's work affected the Beaumont-Fletcher group of plays; and that

this is the alternative, Dr. Thorndike's monograph makes practically certain. It is perhaps the chief merit of the treatise that its writer has, in a sober and careful way, advanced a new theory so effectively that students of Shakespeare's relations to his contemporaries must take it into account. Extant data do not permit the exact proving (or disproving) of the author's contention: where, then, the conclusions must remain more or less tentative, it is no small achievement to present an hypothesis that so reasonably explains a definite part of Shakespeare's career.

A few comments may be added on points of detail.

P. 22. The 1647 Beaumont-Fletcher folio is said to contain thirty-six plays. It contains thirty-four plays and one mask, that of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn by Beaumont. Mr. Fleay's remark (*Chrón. Eng. Drama*, I, 167) that it contains "all the Fletcher plays (save one) not yet printed in Quarto, thirty-six in all," is ambiguous if not wrong.

P. 61, footnote. Mr. Fleay is quoted as saying that the acting of Heywood's *Lucrece* at the Red Bull is mentioned for the first time in "the 1635 quarto." Mr. Fleay says 1638 (*Hist. of Stage*, 201); but as a matter of fact the Red Bull is also mentioned on the title page of the fourth edition of *Lucrece*, printed in 1630. I have not seen an earlier edition.

P. 85, footnote. Regarding *The Four Plays in One*, Mr. Fleay is quoted to the effect that *The Yorkshire Tragedy* was published in 1608 as one of the Four Plays, "as if to delude the unwary purchaser into the belief that he was buying one of the plays then being performed." Dr. Thorndike adds that he has not been able to examine the 1608 quarto, but that all the other authorities consulted "agree in stating that the reference to the *Four Plays in One* is not in the 1608 quarto of the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, but only in the 1619 quarto." The facts are these: the reference appears in the 1608 quarto as Mr. Fleay says (the other authorities are wrong); but Mr. Fleay's comment is not warranted. The reference does not appear on the title page, but only at the heading of the play, where it is certainly much too inconspicuous to serve as a bait for an "unwary purchaser." The heading reads: All's One, Or, One of the foure Plaies in one, called a Yorkshire Tragedy.

P. 89. Dr. Thorndike says of *The Captain*, that in the folio of

1679 the scenes are marked. This statement is doubtless based on Mr. Fleay's remark (*Chron. Eng. Drama*, I, 195) that in this edition the scenes are marked for the first time. But they are also marked in the 1647 folio.

P. 173. The comment that *Pericles* is "astonishingly undramatic," makes it worth while to note that *Pericles*, as presented in Munich under Herr Possart, with comparatively few alterations of consequence, is a pretty good acting play.

A few typographical errors may be noted. Some of the quotations contain mistakes (doubtless through following inaccurate reprints), as for instance p. 45, footnote 3: "an anti-masque all of spirits or divine" (add "Natures").—p. 68, line 20: "who because they saw it acted and knew whereof they spoke are the better to be believed,—and for my part, I censure thus—that I have never read a better." This should read: . . . "knew what they spake, are the better to be believed; and for my part, I censure it thus, that I never read a better." Other little slips are:—p. 12, footnote 4,—for 370 read 170; p. 17, footnote 2,—for 374 read 375; p. 21, footnote 3,—for II read I; p. 30,—the reference under footnote 2 applies to 3, and *vice versa*; p. 61, footnote 3,—for 189 read 205; p. 73, line 10,—for June 1661 read June 1601; p. 85, footnote 4,—for May 21 read May 2; p. 91, line 5,—for 1643 read 1647; p. 107, footnote,—for Mortclake read Mortlake, or More-clacke.

A few words should be added concerning the two little-known plays which Dr. Thorndike was not able to include (see p. 107, footnote, and errata) in his review of 1601-1611 drama,—*The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke*, and *The Wit of a Woman*. These two plays do not affect the thesis, as neither of them can be counted a "romantic" play, and the former is not a history at all. *The Two Maids of More-clacke* [Mortlake], with *the Life and Simple Manner of John in the Hospital*, by Robert Armin, is noted both by Collier (*Hist. Eng. Dram. Poetry*, iii, 418) and by Mr. Fleay (*Chr. Eng. Drama*, I, 26), a fact which renders its omission from Ward's *Eng. Dram. Lit.* all the more surprising. (Dr. Ward, indeed, says that *The Valiant Welshman* is Armin's only extant play. *Eng. Dram. Lit.*, i, 435.) It has apparently not been reprinted since its first publication in 1609, save by Dr. Grosart in vol. xiv of *Occasional Issues of Unique or Very Rare Books*,

1880. The play itself is not divided into acts or scenes and contains no list of *dramatis personae*. As a drama it is not very interesting, although there is no lack of movement. The plot is involved: a widower with two daughters (the two maids) has just married a widow with one son. The bride wishes to arrange a match between her son and one of her step-daughters; the girls themselves have arranged matches with two young gentlemen; but in opposition to them all, the father seeks far higher marriages for his daughters. The situation has hardly been stated, when the complication is immensely increased by the arrival, Enoch-Arden-like, of the supposedly dead lawful husband of the bride. Unlike Tennyson's hero, he makes known his identity to his wife alone, who receives him secretly, while her second husband makes the first husband master of ceremonies at the wedding festivities. Absurd conditions, placed upon the young gentlemen in love with the two maids, come to be fulfilled, the bride returns to her lawful spouse, the disappointed bridegroom and father takes matters very coolly, and across the stage from time to time drifts John-in-the-Hospital (Christ's), an amiable lunatic who supplies the otherwise missing fun. This John-in-the-Hospital is a real personage, whose unconsciously funny doings had been described by Armin himself in his *Foole upon Foole*, 1605. Several of the stock anecdotes in that treatise are presented dramatically in the play, and the character, although having nothing to do with the plot, must have presented a congenial part to Armin, who, as actor, was practically the successor of the famous clown Richard Tarlton (died 1588).

The Wit of a Woman is mentioned neither by Collier nor by Dr. Ward, and even Mr. Fleay says that he has not seen it (*Chron. Eng. Drama*, ii, 320). A copy, bearing date 1604, is in the British Museum, however. The play is drawn up on simple lines, which provide complications in abundance. Four old widowers have each one son and one daughter, and the fathers and the sons, as rivals, woo the unrelated daughters. The girls' school-mistress, a rude gallant and his man, and several patients, fill in the *dramatis personae*. Acts and scenes are not indicated. The possibilities of the story are not fully exploited in the plot, but several of the obvious situations are briskly presented. The promise of the title and the prologue is not exactly carried out: 'age was cosened' and 'youth was pleas'd,' but hardly through "a woman's

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wit" does it all happen, although a woman's cleverness brings about the denouement. The play is inextricably mixed up, so far as names and relationships are concerned, and the table of *dramatis personae* (called "The Interlocutors") contains misprints, and does not square with the names in the text. An attempt to draw up a correct list of characters fails on account of recurring contradictions. One is not sure at any time whose daughter any girl is, which girl any old man is in love with, or which any young man is going to marry. There is no differentiation in character and a name fits anywhere; indeed the recklessness of the printer (whose fault it seems largely to be) in bestowing names on the speakers nearly marries a brother and sister. But in spite of this elementary tangle the plot is perfectly clear in general contour: four old men love four young girls, and four young men love the same girls; secretly the youths declare their passion, and the elders formally tender their hands; the girls accept the old men, and marry the youths, and the four wise old men, being the fathers of the eight happy young people, give them their blessing. The curtain falls on a dozen well-pleased persons. The dialogue has a strong flavor of Euphuism, in so far as Euphuism implies balanced antithesis: there is, however, no transverse alliteration (at least not to a noticeable degree), and no pseudo-natural history. There is nothing very witty or epigrammatic and the fun (of a rough kind) does not grow out of the action.

The play has not, I think, been reprinted. The only other play under the same title in the British Museum catalogue is by T. Walker, 1705. This play bears no resemblance whatever to the play of a century before. It is a smart, quick-moving little farce of six characters, and its movement depends entirely upon a woman's daring and clever schemes. It was presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 24 June, 1704 (*English Stage 1660-1830.*, vol. ii, p. 310).

MARTIN W. SAMPSON.

British Museum,
October, 1901.